

LV.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Notices, &c.*

MR. SWINHOE having been placed as Interpreter on the staff of H. E. Sir Hope Grant (the Commander-in-chief of the Chinese expedition), left Hongkong for the north in the steamer 'Lightning' on the 9th of June last. He has favoured us with the following letter, dated—

“ At sea, June 16th, 1860.

“ We left Hongkong on the 9th of June. On the 12th it blew so hard from the north that we were obliged to put into a bay south of Lam-yit Island for shelter. We remained there until the following morning. During our delay we went ashore ; and I send you a sketch of my observations on the place.

“ The island of Lam-yit or South-sun, south of which we anchored, is the largest of a group of islands not far from the city of Hing-wha, on the Chinese coast of the Formosa channel. It is about twelve miles in circumference, a muddy creek dividing it nearly into two, and is bounded by a sandy beach and rocks running into the sea. Ranges of hill occur on both sides, chiefly formed, as on the opposite coast of China, of disintegrated granite of hoary aspect, with occasional strips of clay. Natural vegetation is extremely scanty ; and not a tree occurs on the island, except a stunted peach or wild pear hidden in some chasm in the hill-side. The little available portion of the flat land is worked by the natives for agricultural purposes ; and the sandy soil, strengthened by human manure, is forced to yield crops of rice, ground-nuts (*Arachis hypogæa*), &c., in apparently thriving condition. But it does not require much knowledge of the coast of China to see that it is not upon the produce of the fields that the natives depend for maintenance. They are nominally fishermen, but actually pirates ; and a filthier and more squalid race I think I have seldom seen. Their dialect has a few expressions in common with that of Amoy ; but the greater part of it is distinct, and would probably be found nearer to that of Hing-wha. We managed, however, to make ourselves understood.

“ From the above description of the country, a large or important Avifauna would hardly be expected. I only noted the following species :—

"1. *Accipiter*, sp. Probably the same as the Sparrow-hawk of Amoy.

"2. *Cypselus vittatus*, Jard. & Selb. Building among the huts.

"3. *Hirundo gutturalis*, Scop. Nesting under the eaves and over the doorways of the houses.

"4. *Anthus thermophilus*, Hodgson.

"5. *Motacilla luzoniensis*, Scop.

"6. *Petrocossyphus manillensis* (Bodd.).

"7. *Alauda caelivox*, Swinhoe. One of the commonest birds in the island. Numbers were singing all around, some on the wing, others while perched on the ground.

"8. *Acridotheres cristatellus* (Linn.).

"9. *Pica sericea*, Gould.

"10. *Egialites cantianus* (Lath.). Numbers of these little fellows were scampering about the sands all day long. They run with great velocity, and then, with a pretty whistle, spring on wing and fly round and round in long circles. Walking along the beach in the afternoon, when it was blowing hard from the north, we came to a sudden depression in the sand. From this, out ran several of these little Plovers as hard as their legs would carry them. They seemed loth to take wing, and had evidently retired into this hollow to seek shelter from the wind. The males vary somewhat in the intensity of their red and black summer tints.

"11. *Herodias garzetta* (Linn.). One female specimen only was seen and shot. It was evidently a straggler.

"12. *Sterna velox*, Rüpp. Several of these fine Terns were seen at various times, flapping past and uttering their hoarse screams.

"13. *Sterna minuta*, Linn. (?). An elegant little Tern, of this species probably. I know of no other of such small dimensions. A pair of them were flying over the long sand-beach on the south of the island; and one of them perched on the mud for several minutes.

"14. *Anous stolidus* (Linn.). This, or an allied species, was seen skimming about towards the sea."

Herr Hofrath Theodor von Heuglin requests us to notice the following *errata* in, and *addenda* to, his "List of Birds observed during a voyage in the Red Sea," published in last year's 'Ibis' (p. 337 *et seq.*):—

P. 340, No. 24 is *Nectarinia metallica*.

P. 341, No. 29 should be *Acrocephalus stentorius*, nec *turdoides*.

No. 32 *a.*? should be *Calamoherpe pallida*, Gervais.

P. 345, No. 75. The feet of *Charadrius cinereicollis*, mihi, are reddish yellow; but in the breeding-season, I suppose, bright red. This species is very closely allied to *C. tricollaris*, but smaller, and different, especially in the tail-markings.

P. 347, No. 93. *Numenius tenuirostris* should be *N. arquatus*.

No. 94. "*Limosa rufa*?" is certainly this species.

P. 351, No. 121. *Sterna*, sp., is probably *Sterna fuliginosa*. I sent a specimen of this bird to Dr. Hartlaub, but he was not able to determine it accurately.

No. 127 ought to be *Dysporus fuscus*. This species is very closely allied to *D. brasiliensis*, perhaps identical with it.

P. 352, No. 130. *Phalacrocorax*, sp., is perhaps *P. melanogaster*, Cuv. (*P. lugubris*, Rüpp.). I found *P. cormoranus* not uncommon in the winter in the Gulf of Suez.

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

Fordingbridge, August 7th, 1860.

SIR,—Before perusing the remarks in the January Number of your interesting periodical, of which I am a "Constant Reader," I had entertained many objections to the 'Zoologist List of British Birds,' which I have long felt to be an "unsatisfactory compilation."

It appears to me that a really reliable list of British birds is still a desideratum, and it has occurred to me that such a list, published in 'The Ibis,' or separately, in the form of a pamphlet issued under your auspices, would be esteemed a boon by many interested in the ornithology of the British Isles.

I think it would add to the interest and usefulness of such a list if marks were attached to distinguish those birds which are

known to breed in Britain, those whose eggs have been discovered elsewhere, and those whose nidification is still unknown. When the birds are only accidental or occasional visitors to our shores, a mark might be attached to signify from what continent they are most probably stragglers; and there might be no objection to the addition of a supplementary list specifying, as in Mr. Doubleday's 'Nomenclature,' such birds as "have been placed in the British list, but rest on slender evidence, or have been introduced by mistake."

If you consider these suggestions worth submitting to your contributors and readers, I trust we may, ere long, be enabled to welcome the appearance of 'The Ibis' list of British birds, which, by its authenticity, may, I hope, remove or lessen the confusion and uncertainty produced by the various catalogues now published.

Yours, &c., T. BEAVEN RAKES.

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

The Elms, Camp Hill.

SIR,—On Sept. 26th, 1860, at a meeting of the Birmingham Natural History Association, Mr. A. Franklin, taxidermist, exhibited a magnificent hybrid of the Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), with the Black Grouse (*T. tetrix*). It was shot this season in Perthshire by a gentleman of our town, and placed in Mr. Franklin's hands for preservation.

The leading characters of this bird are those of the Capercaillie; the bill, however, is black. In 1852 a similar hybrid was shot in the same county.

In 1857, a nest of nine eggs of the Capercaillie was recorded in the 'Perthshire Courier' as taken near Logielmond.

Associating these facts, it seems evident that the extirpation of this bird, which was reintroduced by the Marquis of Breadalbane in 1838-9, is not yet completely effected.

Yours, &c., GEO. R. TWINN.

We believe, on the contrary, that the Capercaillie is rapidly extending itself in Perthshire, and that, in some of the well-preserved parts of that county, both the pure bird and the hybrid between it and the Black Grouse are far from uncommonly met with.—ED.

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

Stanley, Falkland Islands,
July 28th, 1860.

SIR,—Permit me to correct a slight error that appeared in the January Number of 'The Ibis' for this year, which Mr. Tristram has been good enough to send me. In the illustrations of the eggs of two Raptorial birds from the Falkland Islands (Plate I.), the second egg (figured as a rare variety of the egg of "*Milvago australis*") is undoubtedly that of the Turkey Buzzard (*Cathartes aura*). See Mr. Gould's description of this egg in the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society' for last year, p. 93. I know of no variety of egg of *Milvago australis*, except that some are lighter in colour than others, but they are invariably of the same shape.

Yours, &c., C. C. ABBOTT.

We much regret that this mistake should have been made. It occurred, no doubt, through the way in which the eggs were identified, viz. by numbers attached to them.

We have lately had an opportunity of examining a fine series of birds from the Falkland Islands, collected by Capt. Pack. It contains examples of five different species of Penguins: viz. *Aptenodytes forsteri*, G. R. Gray; *Eudyptes chrysocome* (Forst.); *E. chrysolophus*, Brandt; *E. papua* (Forst.), and *Spheniscus magellanicus* (Forst.). There can be little doubt that Capt. Abbott's "Jackass Penguin" (*anteà*, p. 336) has been wrongly referred to *Aptenodytes demersa*, and that it is really the *Spheniscus magellanicus*, which is a closely allied species.

Baron Richard König-Warthausen informs us that, according to Dr. Blasius (who has examined the parent-birds, now in the Stuttgart Museum), the Falcon's egg, described by him in the April Number of 'The Ibis' (*anteà*, p. 124), does not belong to *Falco eleonoræ*, but to *F. concolor*. Dr. Blasius likewise pronounces the little Tern obtained by Herr von Heuglin in the Red Sea (of which the eggs are described *anteà*, p. 125) to be *Sterna albigena*, Licht., and not *S. senegalensis*, Swains.